Eastern Arctic Mariners’ Guide

The following mammals are common in the eastern Arctic; however, sightings of other species may also occur. It is possible for marine mammals to venture outside of their common habitat ranges and be seen elsewhere.

**Killer Whale**

*Length*: 7–10 m

*Appearance*: Black body with white underside and spot behind the eyes. Tail and triangular dorsal fin in the middle of the back. Blow is tall and column-like, approximately 4 m in height.

*Behaviour*: Typically form groups of 2–25.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: JFMAMJJASON

*Status*: Special concern

**Bowhead Whale**

*Length*: 13–19 m

*Appearance*: The body is predominantly black with some white (non-pigmented) regions appearing on the chin, eyelids, flipper insertions, tail stock and flukes.

*Behaviour*: Often alone but sometimes in groups of 2–10.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: JFMAMJJASON

*Status*: Special concern

**Minke Whale**

*Length*: 6–10 m

*Appearance*: Dark grey, black or brown back with a white spot on each pectoral fin. Large hook-shaped dorsal fin. Relatively small tail.

*Behaviour*: Mainly solitary. Smell appears first when they surface to breathe. Occasionally breach out of the water.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: Unknown

*Status*: Not at risk

**Hooded Seal**

*Length*: 2–3 m

*Appearance*: Silvery-white with dark blotches. Males have a black “hood” on forehead and inflatable balloon-like nasal cavity.

*Behaviour*: Solitary, except during pupping, mating and moulting.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: JFMAMJJASON

*Status*: Not at risk

**Bearded Seal**

*Length*: 1.5 m

*Appearance*: Bearded seal with dark grey body with brown tinge on the head and light colouring on the front. Long, white whiskers and square-shaped front flippers.

*Behaviour*: Solitary but form small groups during mating and moulting.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: JFMAMJJASON

*Status*: Data deficient

**Harp Seal**

*Length*: Up to 2 m

*Appearance*: Grey body with black or brown head and long, black “harp-shaped” saddle on the back.

*Behaviour*: When migrating, the seals leap out of the water, like dolphins.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: JFMAMJJASON

*Status*: Not assessed

**Ringed Seal**

*Length*: Up to 1.5 m

*Appearance*: Dark grey body with light rings on the back and silver colouring on the front.

*Behaviour*: Associated with ice floes and pack ice. Maintain breathing holes throughout winter.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: JFMAMJJASON

*Status*: Special concern

**Greenland Shark**

*Length*: 2–5 m

*Appearance*: May be brown, black, grey or a spotted mix of all three. Two small dorsal fins and small eyes.

*Behaviour*: Slow swimming. Usually observed near the surface during the winter and retreats to deeper waters (180–550 m) during the summer.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: Unknown

*Status*: Not assessed

**Walrus**

*Length*: 2–4 m

*Appearance*: Brown skin. Broad flat muzzle, white whiskers and two distinctive tusks.

*Behaviour*: Occur in tight groups on ice floes or on land.

*Sensitive months (calving and foraging activities and risk of ice entrapment)*: JFMAMJJASON

*Status*: Special concern

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**Recommended Distance Around Marine Mammals**

(Changes in navigation should not be assumed if they compromise safe operations)

- **Slow down and avoid abrupt course changes**
- **Keep drones at a min. 300 m vertical distance and 1/2 nautical mile (900 m) radius from animals.**
- **Refrain from drone flight maneuvers, including: taking off, landing, altering course or altitude.**

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Scan for a digital version with references
**WWF RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Walrus Haulouts**  
- Maintain a setback of 5 km seaward of a walrus haulout, any time during the year.

**Whale Sensitive Habitats**  
- Be cautious in whale calving, foraging and migration areas from mid-July to mid-September and follow mitigation procedures in the vicinity of marine mammals.  
  - Wildlife will be given right of way.  
  - Adhere to setback distances (see chart on first page).  
  - Maintain a straight course and constant speed, avoiding erratic maneuvers.  
  - When marine mammals appear to be trapped or disturbed by vessel movements, implement appropriate measures to mitigate disturbance, including stopping movement until wildlife have moved away from the immediate area.

**Polynyas (Ikirasaaq)**  
- Avoid shipping and icebreaking activities, particularly through inlets, between mid-November to mid-July (Ukiaq to Upingaaq seasons).

**Floe edges (Sinaaq)**  
- Avoid shipping through and around floe edges during mid-March to mid-July (Upingaaq and Upingaq seasons).

**Discharges and Dumping**  
- Avoid discharging operational wastes within or near protected area boundaries.

**Reduce Black Carbon**  
- Avoid using heavy fuel oil and use distillate fuels and a particulate filter or cleaner alternative fuels.

**Icebreaking**  
- Avoid icebreaking during ice formation and breakup.  
- Avoid crossing Inuit on-ice community travel routes, unless accompanied by ice bridging plan and having consulted with municipal councils, ITOS and regional wildlife organizations within a 500 km radius of the route.  
- Avoid icebreaking through caribou sea-ice crossings.  
- Avoid icebreaking in Northwest Passage/Coronation Gulf between Victoria Island and the Mainland (Dolphin & Union caribou).  
- Avoid icebreaking in Peel Sound and Franklin Strait (Peary caribou).  
- Avoid icebreaking in narrow seaways between Bathurst Island and the Small Islands north of Bathurst Island (Peary caribou).  

**Speeds**  
- When within 100m of a marine mammal, reduce speed to less than 7 knots. Avoid abrupt course changes.

**Seabird Colonies**  
- When birds are present, year round:  
  - 500 m setback for ships from seabird colonies.  
  - 100 m setback from seabird colonies for zodiacs, kayaks and other small launch vessels.  
  - 2 km setback distance from Ivory gull breeding sites.

**Seal Pupping (Whelping)**  
- Avoid seal whelping (delivery and nursing of seal pups) areas from late-February to early-July.

**Local Community and Livelihood Areas**  
- Give right of way.  
- Do not approach or take photographs of harvesting activities.

**NOTE:** For navigation purposes, please use charts provided by the Canadian Hydrographic Service.
**LOCAL COMMUNITY PHONE NUMBERS & HUNTER AND TRAPPER ORGANIZATIONS:**

Contact the nearest community Hunters and Trappers Organization/Association for local knowledge of marine mammals:

- Aviit Hunters & Trappers, Coral Harbour: 867-925-8622
- Aiviit Hunters & Trappers, Kimmirut: 867-925-8624
- Amaq Hunters & Trappers, Igloolik: 867-979-5648
- Agguig Hunters & Trappers, Chesterfield Inlet: 867-898-9063
- Clyde River Hunters & Trappers, Clyde River: 867-924-6202
- Akuaktut Hunters & Trappers, Cambridge Bay: 867-983-2426
- Gjoa Haven Hunters & Trappers, Gjoa Haven: 867-366-6028
- Igloolik Hunters & Trappers, Igloolik: 867-934-8807
- Kangiqsujuaq Municipality Hall: 867-938-3142
- Mayakilik Hunters & Trappers, Kimmirut: 867-939-2355
- Mittimatalik Hunters & Trappers, Pond Inlet: 867-989-8856
- Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Iqaluit, Nunavut: 867-975-7300
- Pangnirtung Hunters & Trappers, Pangnirtung: 867-473-8751
- Resolute Bay Hunters & Trappers, Resolute Bay: 867-923-3170

**ENVIRONMENTAL EMERGENCY CONTACT**

Canadian Coast Guard Marine Communication and Traffic Services Iqaluit (Iqaluit MCTS)

- Contact information to report a marine environmental emergency, such as an oil spill or oiled wildlife: 867-979-5269

**CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE**

Canadian Wildlife Service contact information:

- Phone: 1-800-668-6767
- Email: ec.priseaccessoire-incidentaltake.ec@canada.ca

**NATIONAL PARKS**

Ukkusiksalik National Park:

- Phone: 867-462-4500
- Email: ukkusiksalik.info@pc.gc.ca

Auyuittuq National Park:

- Pangnirtung Office - Phone: 867-473-2500
- Qikiqtarjuaq Office - Phone: 867-927-8834
- Email: nunavut.info@pc.gc.ca

Sirmilik National Park:

- Phone: 867-989-8092
- Email: sirmilik.info@pc.gc.ca

**WWF-CANADA CONTACT**

Please contact for errors, omissions, comments or additions.

Sam Davin, Senior Specialist, Wildlife & Industry, WWF-Canada: sdavin@wwfcanada.org

**MARINE WILDLIFE SIGHTINGS, ENCOUNTERS & INCIDENTS**

Report to: Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Steve Ferguson, 204-983-9037, steve.ferguson@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

You may be asked to provide:

- Date and time you found the animal or witnessed the incident
- Specific location, including latitude and longitude (if available) or driving directions (if accessible by land)
- Species or type of animal, including a description of the size, colour, features
- Condition of the animal: alive, sick, injured, recently dead, badly rotting
- Number of animals involved
- Your contact information, including name and phone number
COMMUNITY CONTACTS

- Aiviit Hunters & Trappers, Coral Harbour: 867-925-8622
- Aiviq Hunters & Trappers, Kinngait: 867-897-8214
- Amaruq Hunters & Trappers, Iqaluit: 867-979-6848
- Aqigiq Hunters & Trappers, Chesterfield Inlet: 867-898-9063
- Baker Lake Hunters & Trappers, Baker Lake: 867-793-2520
- Clyde River Hunters & Trappers, Clyde River: 867-924-6202
- Ekaluktutiak Hunters & Trappers, Cambridge Bay: 867-983-2426
- Gjoa Haven Hunters & Trappers, Gjoa Haven: 867-360-6028
- Hall Beach Hunters & Trappers, Sanirajak: 867-928-8994
- Igloolik Hunters & Trappers, Igloolik: 867-934-8807
- Ikajutit Hunters & Trappers, Arctic Bay: 867-439-8483
- Iviq Hunters & Trappers, Grise Fiord: 867-980-9063
- Ivujivik Municipality Hall: 819-922-9940
- Kangiqsujuaq Municipality Hall: 819-338-3342
- Kurtairujuark Hunters & Trappers, Pelly Bay, Kugaaruk: 867-769-7002
- Mayukalik Hunters & Trappers, Kimmirut: 867-939-2355
- Mittimatalik Hunters & Trappers, Pond Inlet: 867-899-8856
- Nattivak Hunters & Trappers, Qikiqtarjuaq: 867-927-8836
- Naujaat Hunters & Trappers, Naujaat: 867-462-4334
- Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Iqaluit, Nunavut: 867-975-7300
- Pangnirtung Hunters & Trappers, Pangnirtung: 867-473-8751
- Quaqtaq Municipality Hall: 819-492-9912
- Resolute Bay Hunters & Trappers, Resolute Bay: 867-252-3170
- Salluit Municipality Hall: 819-255-8953
- Taloyoak Hunters & Trappers, Taloyoak: 867-561-5066
REFERENCES


